



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *107th* CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2001

Senate RAIL SERVICE SECURITY

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today during this period of time when we are discussing the need for additional security for airports and airliners to again voice my strong support for the measures included in the legislation that is soon to be before us.

Having said that, I also observe that this country has shown it is pretty good at fighting the last war in preparing to fight the next war. Those of us who are students of the history of World War I know that World War II was a lot different from World War I, and we only have to think of the Maginot Line to know how different it was. Korea was different from World War II; Vietnam was different from Korea; the Persian Gulf was different from Vietnam.

We are now struggling in this war against terrorism to make sure the kinds of tragedies that occurred on September 11 do not occur again, and we should do that. If we look back at the history of the last several years with respect to terrorism, we had the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the bombing of two U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998, the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole last year as it was at anchor, and now the use of our own aircraft as guided missiles to be used against the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.

Now as we prepare this fight against terrorism to fight the last war, to make sure no other hijacked aircraft can be flown into other targets, we need to remember there is a different element to this war, a different front to this war, and it is not just airplanes; it is not just airlines; it is not just airports.

As the Presiding Officer knows, I travel to my State of Delaware most mornings and nights on the train. We are mindful of trains in our State. We do not have a commercial airport. We use Philadelphia or BWI for most of our commercial flights. A lot of people take the train. It is not just in Delaware. It is a lot of folks up and down the Northeast corridor; indeed, a lot of people around the country.

During a given day, we have people who get on the trains in my State and some head south toward Washington and others head North toward New York City where they work or go for business or pleasure.

In order to get into New York City, a train has to go through tunnels. There is a network of tunnels underneath New York City, underneath the waterways. Some of those tunnels are used by Amtrak, some are used by New Jersey Transit, some by the Long Island Railroad. Amtrak is a minority user of those tunnels.

All told, I understand between 300,000 and 400,000 people a day ride trains, whether they are intercity passenger rail trains of Amtrak or commuter rails, transit trains--between 300,000 to 400,000 people a day go through those tunnels into New York City.

Those tunnels were built during the Great Depression, between World War I and World War II. We have tunnels that are even older than that around Baltimore and indeed right here in our Nation's Capital, some of which go back to the administration, not of FDR, but of President Grant.

I would like to stand before you and say each of those tunnels through which trains pass carrying hundreds of thousands of people every day is not a target for terrorists, but if they were, they are tunnels that are well ventilated, well lit, there are adequate provisions to detect those who might want to do damage to the tunnels or to people who use the trains. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The tunnels are not well ventilated. They are not well lit. They are not tunnels with good surveillance that would enable security officers to detect the movements of suspicious persons or materiel.

As we prepare to fight the last war that grew out of the tragedies of September 11, I hope we will not forget those hundreds of thousands of people who are in those tunnels every day going in and out of New York City. I hope we will not forget the thousands of people who are in those tunnels every day beneath this city and beneath Baltimore.

I am told, as far as passenger capacity aboard airplanes is concerned, there are about 150 people who can be seated aboard a 727 jetliner. The new Acela Express trains carry over 200 people. I am told the seating capacity aboard a 737 is roughly 150 people. The Metroliners that go up and down the Northeast corridor carry 225 people. A 747 aircraft can seat maybe 400 people. A conventional train, the Acela regional trains that go up and down the Northeast corridor, can seat up to 500 people. And a new 767 airliner can carry as many as 500 people. The Auto Train that goes from Lorton, VA, to Sanford, FL, near Disney World, carries 500 people and some 600 cars.

My hope and my fervent prayer is that nothing ever happens to any of those people on any of the airliners again or any of the trains I talked about or the other commuter trains that work their way through the Northeast corridor and the cities around the country. I hope that is the case.

That may not be the case. As we prepare to fight this next war, we need to keep in mind the Achilles heel with respect to security of passenger rail.

A package has been put together addressing some of our biggest concerns for the safety of folks who are using trains. I will tell my colleagues one of the reasons I think this is important.

Think back to what happened on September 11. One of the first things that happened was the airplanes that were ready to take off did not take off, and those in the air were ordered to land. As that happened, in the Northeast corridor Amtrak kept working.

The first trains heading north from here pull out at 3:30 a.m. The first trains coming out of New York City heading south pull out at 3:30 a.m. As aircraft were downed across the country, Amtrak was running and carrying hundreds of people. When people could not get out of Montreal, Amtrak made provisions to get them where they needed to go in the United States. When O'Hare and Los Angeles shut down and the Postal Service was grounded, Amtrak carried over 200,000 carloads of mail, I am told.

When people and planes around this country--Raleigh and Pittsburgh--were grounded, Amtrak stepped in to move emergency personnel and equipment from one end of the country to the other where it was needed.

My colleagues know the two Senators from Delaware are big supporters of passenger rail service. We think that is an important component of our national transportation policy.

This is not an effort during this time of distress and fear to try to obtain extra funding for passenger rail service, although some suggest this is an appropriate time to do that. Instead, what we have in mind is to try to strategically pick a handful of items

that need to be fixed in order to ensure, just as we are making travel for airline passengers safer, that we simultaneously make travel for rail passengers safer.

What we are proposing to do is to rehabilitate those seven tunnels that go into Manhattan. We have, as was said earlier, old tunnels in Baltimore and in Washington as well. They all have the same problems. They need to be fixed, and we ought to get started fixing them.

I have been riding trains lately that have Amtrak police officers on them. They are working extra shifts. They are working doubles. They are working a lot of extra hours. They cannot continue to do that forever. We need additional Amtrak police officers to meet the security burdens that are placed on them. We are going to have sky marshals on aircraft, and we ought to. We ought to have, in many cases, Amtrak police officers on our trains. We do not have enough of them to go around.

More people are taking the train these days. It is not just here; it is the Texas Eagle, trains out on the west coast. It is trains all over the United States. It is the Acela Express trains, the Metroliners, conventional trains in the corridor and conventional trains all over the country. More people are riding rail, and my guess is more people will ride rail as we go forward. We need to make sure they are safe.

In addition to more police officers, we need more canine and we need training for those officers who are going to be using the dogs. We need video equipment that allows Amtrak to monitor sensitive points along rail lines. We can do that remotely. We can do it effectively. It makes sense. We can use, and ought to have some beefing up of, the aerial inspections that are available to use with Amtrak. We can do it by day; we can do it by night.

Some people have said to this Senator and to Senator Biden and others that they

support making travel by rail safer; that it sounds like a good idea. But what they also say is this is not the time and place to do that.

I say to my friends and colleagues who have made the offer of supporting legislation like this sometime further down the line, we have heard similar promises, literally, right in this Chamber about a year ago. We are now doing something for passenger rail further down the line, and we are a year further down the line. That which was supposed to have been done has not been done.

What was supposed to have been done was the creation of high-speed rail corridors in places all around the country. It makes no sense to put people on an airplane to fly 150 miles, 200 miles in densely populated corridors where they could as efficiently, or more efficiently, take a train. That would make easier the security job, the safety job of the people running the airports. We ought to do that.

We have not come back and addressed that question raised a year ago to enable us to work with State and local governments to create high-speed rail corridors. That is another issue. We are not going to talk about that. We are going to stay away from that. This is a different argument, but this is the right day, and this is the right place, to raise that argument.

Passenger rail utilization is up probably 30 to 40 percent since September 11. Any number of the trains I have ridden in the corridor, every seat is full—Acela Express, Metroliners, conventional trains as well. We are seeing a similar kind of jump in ridership around the country. A lot of the people riding those trains used to fly airplanes. They are now on a train because they feel safer, maybe because it is more convenient.

I want to make sure they feel safer, not just continue to feel safer but to make sure they are safer because we will take right

now the kind of steps to protect their safety, just as we are taking steps to protect the safety of those who would fly in their 727s, 737s, 747s, or 767s.

This is the time, this is the place, this is the legislation on which we should debate

these issues and we should approve them. We should affirm them and we should put these safety precautions in place for passengers on rail as we do the passengers of airlines.